

**RAMPEDRE, THE ON-LINE PERMANENT
WORLD REPORT ON THE RIGHT TO
WATER:
FROM THE DECLARATION TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO
WATER**

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BIOGRAPHY

FLORENCE HIGUET

With a background in law and a specialisation in human rights, Florence Higuët became a project manager at the European Research Institute on Water Policy, which was created five years ago by Professor Riccardo Petrella.

Within the Institute she is more specifically in charge of the on-line permanent world report on the right to water – www.RAMPEDRE.net –, a participatory platform to which different research institutes from all over the world contribute. Her research and the coordination and promotion of RAMPEDRE enable Florence to gain academic, organisational and animation capacities in the field of the human right to water and sanitation.

RICCARDO PETRELLA

In 1967, after a PhD in political and social sciences (specialization in economic policy) at the University of Firenze, Italy, Riccardo Petrella started his career at the European Center for Research in Social Sciences of UNESCO in Vienna, Austria, of which later on he became director.

In 1978, he joined the FAST-program (Forecasting and Assessment in Science and Technology-program) at the European Commission; he directed this program until 1994. Afterwards, he headed the Social Research Division and kept on advising the European Commission on science and technology policies. At the same time, Riccardo Petrella initiated the “Lisbon group” and wrote the book “Limits to competition”.

In 1997, after “The Water Manifesto”, he founded the International Committee for the Global Water Contract.

The European Institute of Research on Water Policy – IERPE – was founded by Riccardo Petrella in 2007 in order to work towards the recognition and implementation of the human right to water, and to promote the public and common nature of water.

ABSTRACT

THE ON-LINE PERMANENT WORLD REPORT ON THE RIGHT TO WATER WWW.RAMPEDRE.NET

To make access to water a reality for both the present and future generations, it is important that the world's citizens work all together.

On 28th July 2010, substantial progress was made: the General Assembly of the United Nations recognised the human right to water and sanitation in its Resolution 64/292.

The idea of the RAMPEDRE website – the on-line Permanent World Report on the Right to Water / Rapport Mondial Permanent en ligne sur le Droit à l'Eau – came after this Resolution.

RAMPEDRE is an open information and analysis system, built on the cooperation of researchers and citizens from all over the world, on the implementation of the right to water.

By combining new information technologies (Internet, website, images, cartography, large scale information sharing) and knowledge (legal, economic, social, cultural, political, and scientific), this new interface aims to contribute to the universal implementation of the right to water.

KEY WORDS

Human right to water and sanitation; participatory platform; on-line world report; open information and analysis system; common good.

1. INTRODUCTION: WATER AND HUMAN BEING

For the last few years the water topic has occupied the national and international scene. This resource, which is essential for

every living being, is one of the main concerns of the world's population. Many actors with competing and hardly compatible interests covet this resource. The implications are significant and it is often a source of conflicts.

These first thoughts lead us to a fundamental question:

“How do we have to consider this common vital natural good in order to satisfy the basic needs of every person on earth, and in order to make everyone an actor of his own future so that a real participative democracy can be built?”

The international community of States gave an answer to this question. On 28th July 2010, substantial progress was made: the General Assembly of the United Nations recognised *the human right to water and sanitation* in its Resolution 64/292¹. More than 140 States approved this text.

By recognising that access to water and sanitation is a right to which every human being is entitled, a new phase has been opened at the legal, institutional, social and economic levels and *new issues* have been raised:

- To what extent will the UN resolution be transferred into national, supra- national and international legislation?
- Will the countries that voted in favour of the resolution adopt national laws, and introduce the right to water into their constitutions?
- What will be the implications of the recognition of the human right to water on water ownership, water uses, its international “trade”, the ownership and management of water public services (drinking water distribution, waste water treatment, water desalination ...)?
- Is access to water as a human right compatible with private ownership and market based water management?
- Is the right to access to drinkable water and sanitation still a human right when citizens have to pay a price

¹A/RES/64/292, UN General Assembly, 28 July 2010, “The human right to water and sanitation”, http://www.un.org/fr/ga/64/resolutions_shtml, consulted on 15/03/2013.

- proportional to the “consumption” of water?
- What will be the effective realisation of the human right to water and sanitation?
 - How are we going to solve the water stress that some regions in the world are undergoing?
 - How should the different water uses (domestic, agricultural, industrial, energetic, and other) be distinguished and given priority?
 - Are new social conflicts about water and old “traditional” international conflicts going to proliferate, or would any specific water management allow us to avoid such situations?
 - Etc.

If *our societies* want to guarantee an *effective universal concretisation* of the right to water and sanitation for all, those questions will have to be answered.

From a *citizen and democracy based approach*, this means that everyone should have access to this knowledge about its right to water and sanitation in order to take action to help creating a fairer (all human beings are equal with respect to human rights), freer (exempt from any process of impoverishment and exclusion), more sustainable (socially, economically, environmentally) and peaceful (solidarity, mutuality, and brotherhood among peoples) society.

To this end, *the combination of water as a natural common good and knowledge as a social common good* resulted in the creation of RAMPEDRE, an information tool that relies on the use of open source technologies.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. A water encyclopaedia and new technologies

The *on-line Permanent World Report on the Right to Water / Rapport Mondial Permanent en ligne sur le Droit à l'Eau* – RAMPEDRE – came about as a “natural” result from the resolution of the UN General Assembly recognising a universal, indivisible and inalienable human right to water.

In the spirit of the commons, the technical tool used to give life to this report is an *open-source software* that everyone can access and improve in a culture of free sharing and citizen participation. New technologies such as the Internet make it possible to disseminate and develop knowledge collaboratively on a large scale.

For water, which is vital to everyone and does not know borders, the open source was a tool of choice to realise the objectives of RAMPEDRE.

Designed as a website, RAMPEDRE is an *open on-line information and analysis system*, built on the common work of researchers and citizens, about the right to drinking water and sanitation for all.

The goal of this very “*watchtower of the right to water*” is to follow up, to promote, and to contribute to the implementation and the justiciability of the right to water everywhere in the world.

2.2. RAMPEDRE’s birth

On 6th and 7th February 2012, RAMPEDRE’s founding meeting took place at the UNESCO in Paris, which morally supports the project. The meeting attendees were the first members of the *international RAMPEDRE network*. They originated from research centres covering different regions of the world and have written the first contents of the RAMPEDRE website. This network is expected to grow and is looking for new partners everywhere in the world.

Since 29th October 2012, after months of work – brainwork and reflections exchange, feasibility study, technical capacities, website design, financial resources, coordination of the international RAMPEDRE network ... –, RAMPEDRE is publicly available.

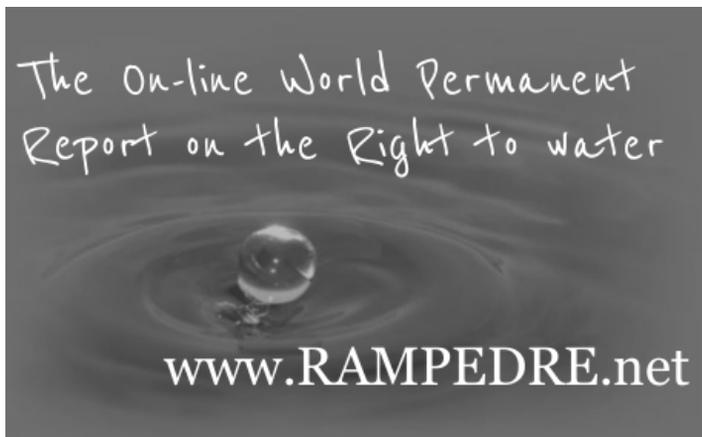


Figure 1. RAMPEDRE's logo

2.2. Functions

RAMPEDRE is an instrument for action at the disposal of every citizen and authority that allows to:

- *monitor and collect information* on the implementation of the right to water at national, continental, international levels from a legal, institutional, economic and social perspective;
- *inform and raise awareness* permanently and freely among citizens and public authorities;
- *foster citizens' initiatives and participation* by providing relevant and appropriate information that could help them to take action in favour of the institutional recognition and socio-economic realisation of the right to water.

2.3. Functioning

RAMPEDRE is a *participatory and open platform*. This principle has two consequences. On the one hand, it means that it is "written" by all those who want to contribute. Therefore, any interested person is welcome to take part in the website content. Accordingly, RAMPEDRE is a permanent process always under construction.

On the other hand, RAMPEDRE's contents are available and

accessible to all without charge. These contents are common goods like water.

Concerning the languages used, the website is *multilingual*: everyone can contribute and comment in its own language.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Content and structure of RAMPEDRE

RAMPEDRE consists of 5 sections:

- **The right to water in international legislation**

The data are presented according to the United Nations level, the other international intergovernmental organisations and the continental intergovernmental organisations.

- **The concretisation of the right to water**

This section is subdivided into a geographic and a thematic approach. The geographic approach focuses on the recognition of the right to water at the local and national levels. The thematic approach deals with the links between the right to water and specific topics such as education, food, indigenous people, women, common good, economic resources...

- **The case law on the right to water and sanitation**

The articles refer to decisions made by judicial authorities (national, continental and international courts or quasi-judicial bodies) related to the right to water and sanitation.

- **The News**

As a *permanent* on-line report, RAMPEDRE intends to be an instrument of *up-to-date* information on the topics covered in the first three sections. This is the role of the “News” which deals with current events. In this way, RAMPEDRE plays the modest part of a “watchtower” of the right to water and sanitation, drawing attention to what is going on and deserves to be reported.

- **Sources and tools**

In addition to the *World Water Library* / Bibliothèque Mondiale

- de l'Eau, this section contains reliable references to
- relevant books and articles related to debates on the right to water and sanitation at the global, continental and national levels;
 - sites and research institutes specialised in water issues;
 - publications of various kinds (films, images).

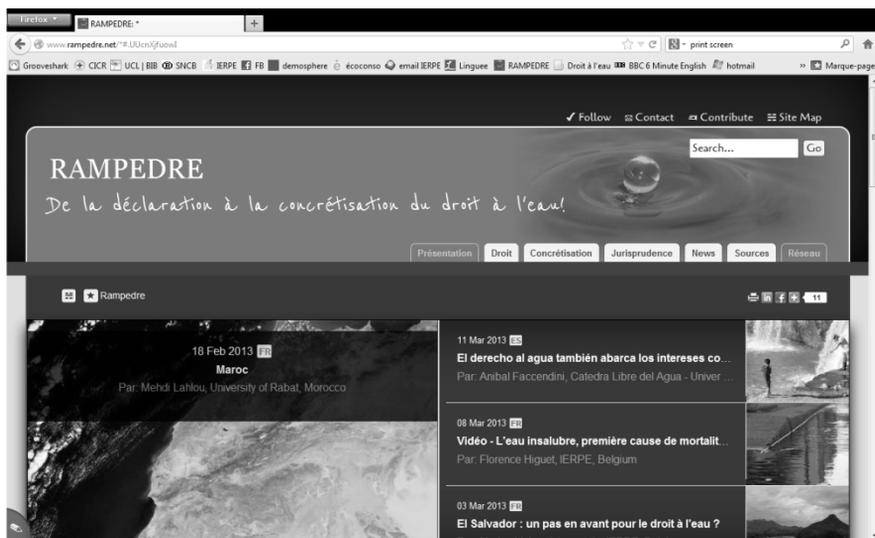


Figure 2. RAMPEDRE's portal

3.2. Facts and numbers

Since RAMPEDRE's launching, four months ago, the website has been visited by more than 1500 single individuals.

More than half of the visits come from Belgium and France. Next to these come Italy, Canada, the USA, Germany, Switzerland and Brazil.

In addition to the basic contents realised by the international RAMPEDRE network members for the 29th October 2012, the website content has been expanded with about 10 new contributions. Notes written by new or previous contributors to RAMPEDRE are as well expected.

To date, since the opening of the website, around 40 news items

linked to the implementation of the human right to water and sanitation in different regions and countries of the world have been published.

The section “Sources and tools” has been completed with a list of books dedicated to the right to water and sanitation that have been published since 2008.

Functionalities to improve the website layout have also been developed: images, key words, display of the language used, a more pleasant and didactic home-page, a website map, a facebook page...

RAMPEDRE’s first Newsletter has been disseminated among the people who subscribed to it – about 40 persons.

3.2. International RAMPEDRE network

The current members of the international RAMPEDRE network are:

- Sylvie PAQUEROT and Gabriel BLOUIN GENEST (University of Ottawa, Canada)
- Philippe BOUCHEIX (University of Auvergne, France)
- Jean-Baptiste CALENDINI (University of Corsica, France)
- Margherita CIERVO (University of Foggia, Italy)
- Anibal FACCENDINI (Cátedra libre del agua, Argentina)
- Flavio FACCENDINI (Asemblea por los derechos sociales, Argentina)
- Nelton FRIEDRICH and Ramos Regio RODRIGO (Itaipu, Brazil and Paraguay)
- Mehdi LAHLOU (INSEA, Morocco)
- Rosario LEMBO (CICMA, Italy)
- Alberto LUCARELLI and Luca LONGHI (University of Naples, Italy)
- Riccardo PETRELLA and Florence HIGUET (IERPE, Belgium)
- Emmanuel POILANE (Fondation France Libertés, France)

- Georges SAWADOGO (University of Koudougou, Burkina Faso)
- Jean-Pierre WAUQUIER (Association H2O, France)
- Michael WINDFUHR (German Institute on human rights, Germany)

4. CONCLUSION: OBSERVATION AND PROSPECTIVE

Four months after the creation of RAMPEDRE, the results are more than satisfactory. The first spontaneous contributions are arriving. Some international and continental intergovernmental organisations have heard about it. Campaigning activists and journalists have contacted us. The returns are positive.

Also, some lessons may already be drawn:

- future articles should focus on *areas and countries that have not yet or only incompletely been covered*, especially the Middle East and Asia;
- *external contributions on thematic subjects* have to be stimulated;
- *promoting RAMPEDRE everywhere* around the world must be a priority: only if people know about its existence, they will use it.

Apart from those pure facts, RAMPEDRE, as an instrument for sharing knowledge and taking action, stimulates reflection on the ties between knowledge, consciousness-raising, and the involvement of citizens who act locally to attain the human rights objectives, more specifically the right to water and sanitation.

Only if people are informed, they will be able to take action in order to defend and implement their right to water and sanitation.

Knowledge in itself must be considered a common good that has to be accessible to everyone, in particular concerning the rights people are entitled to. Human rights are meaningful only if their first recipients are aware of their existence. This certainly applies

to water that is of paramount and vital importance for every human being on earth.

By providing information and keeping an eye on the implementation of the human right to water and sanitation around the world, RAMPEDRE will also enable to connect networks of researchers, campaigning activists and public authorities across the world.

In this respect, plurality of knowledge, information sharing and exchange, new technologies at the service of citizens' movements, horizontal and mutual learning, and citizen inclusion are valued and enhanced.

5. CONTACTS: RAMPEDRE AND YOU

We invite you to visit our website and to spread the word about RAMPEDRE.

Would you like to have more information, to comment and/or to contribute to RAMPEDRE? Please send an email to contributeurs@rampedre.net